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INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 001420

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DEPARTMENT FOR SRAP, SCA/FO, SCA/A, EUR/RPM  
STATE PASS USAID FOR ASIA/SCAA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [EAID](#) [AF](#)  
SUBJECT: ZABUL GOVERNOR NASERI'S TENURE OFF TO A ROCKY START

REF: KABUL 1345

Classified By: PRT and Sub-National Governance Counselor Valerie C. Fowler for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Governor Muhammed Ashraf Naseri's most significant achievement after two months serving as the Governor of Zabul Province is the drafting of a more realistic development plan. Overall, however, Naseri has failed to connect with the people and an ongoing corruption investigation in Badghis will at the very least cast doubt on his ethical standards, thus limiting his effectiveness and influence. Should it transpire, his arrest would require the Independent Director of Local Governance (IDLG) to identify another governor for the poor, remote province with a full-fledged insurgency. End Summary.

Naseri Making Some Efforts on a Development Plan  
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¶2. (SBU) Governor Naseri presented the PRT with a provincial development plan (PDP) after six weeks in the province. The plan is significantly more realistic and focused than the plan of his predecessor as Governor, Dilbar Jan Arman, but it still places a heavy emphasis on infrastructure. The plan, however, contains no proposal for building human capacity -- something Naseri himself has said is Zabul's biggest challenge after security. In conversations with PRT, Naseri identified a number of areas where he needs more and better qualified staff, but aside from a personal assistant (who appears to be working without an official designation or salary), he has not been able to convince any ministries in Kabul to augment line department staff in Zabul. Naseri's other initiative was to announce at a shura in Shar-e-Safa and in a radio message his intention to create "Education Defense Committees" to combat the Taliban's campaign against education in Zabul.

Naseri Not Succeeding in Connecting with the People  
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¶3. (C) Aside from those two projects, Naseri has remained in introductory mode, venturing outside the provincial capital only when the PRT initiated and organized visits to Shahjoy, Shar-e-Safa and Surri districts. Deputy Governor Gulab Shah (strictly protect) told us privately that, aside from the initial welcome calls that followed Naseri's April 1 arrival, the leading elders from Zabul's 20 tribes have not been making an effort to cultivate a relationship with the new governor. Shah said that "ordinary people" have presented Naseri with a variety of petitions, but the province's power brokers have not visited the governor. In a separate conversation, Provincial Council members described Naseri as "educated" but not a particularly good fit for the rough conditions in Zabul. Naseri admitted to PRT that he had invited some mullahs to visit him but claimed they declined because "they were afraid to be seen visiting the governor for fear the insurgents will kill them." (Comment: This may

be true, as the Taliban have successfully intimidated teachers, poll workers and others from cooperating with the government in the last six weeks.)

¶4. (C) Naseri's inability to rally provincial elders to support the government was most evident at a May 5 shura in Shahjoy district. The Taliban had kidnapped and beaten a number of district teachers in late April, so Naseri, the PRT, the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) traveled together up Highway One to hold a large meeting with about 500 residents. After rousing speeches about the importance of education and the need to defeat the insurgents, Naseri asked the elders if they would reopen the schools. They declined, saying they did not feel secure enough.

#### Possible Arrest for Corruption Undermining Tenure

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¶5. (SBU) As reported in reftel, an ongoing investigation from the Kabul Attorney General's office into corruption charges in Badghis that occurred when Naseri was governor has resulted in the arrest of a number of lower-level Badghis officials and strong evidence that Naseri and his son embezzled money. Naseri has not alluded to the investigation in discussions with the PRT, but after Naseri departed for Kabul May 25, Deputy Governor Shah told the PRT about the investigation and Naseri's involvement, which indicated that the word of the investigation had already spread to the province. When Naseri departed, he complained of health problems, particularly with his kidneys, and suggested that he may need to leave Afghanistan for medical treatment. He

KABUL 00001420 002 OF 002

departed Qalat with six suitcases.

Comment

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¶6. (C) Regardless of whether Naseri is arrested, his tenure in Zabul is a no-win situation for the Afghan government. If he is arrested, it will be a black eye against Kabul for appointing a governor it knew was suspected of wide-spread corruption to a troubled province. If he is not arrested and returns to Zabul, the allegations and implications will tarnish his few initiatives and slow down the pace of implementing his development plan because of the need for additional oversight. Either way, despite having good ideas about development, Naseri lacks the energy or drive needed to lead a neglected, poor and insecure province like Zabul. He talks a good game in private, but he has not connected to the people in the capital city of Qalat or in the districts in a way that would improve the perception of GIROA.

EIKENBERRY